

March 30, 2008 by Steve Brandon



Our Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

1. With What Kind of Body Do They Come? (verses 35-49)

2. How Are the Dead Raised? (verses 50-58)

Easter morning we had a marvelous time of joyously celebrating the resurrection of Christ. Appropriately, we spent some time singing of the resurrection of Christ. We spent some time reading about the resurrection of Christ. We spent some time thinking about the resurrection of Christ. I preached about the resurrection of Christ.

But, there is another resurrection that the Scriptures often speak about. It is our resurrection. As Christ has been raised from the dead, those of us who believe in him can look forward to a resurrection of our own with Him.

In fact, as you survey the Scriptures, you will find that about half of the times that the Scriptures speak of the "resurrection," they refer to the resurrection of people from the dead, and not the resurrection of Christ. For instance, when Jesus was discussing with the Sadducees about the resurrection of the dead, it wasn't His resurrection that was on the table. It was the resurrection of those within the Jewish community. Jesus said, "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" (Matt. 22:30). Jesus is speaking about the day when those who have believed in Christ are resurrected from the dead to be with Him.

When Jesus went to visit the tomb of Lazarus, He had a conversation with Mary. Jesus told her, "Your brother will rise again" (John 11:23). Martha replied, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day" (John 11:24). Here, Martha is speaking about the day when Lazarus would be raised. The whole story revolves around a man rising from the dead.

Paul anticipated the day when he would be resurrected to be with Christ forever. He said, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. 3:10-11).

The writer to the Hebrews wrote about how godly people have remained faithful to the Lord, anticipating their own resurrection (Heb. 11:35). In the last book of the Bible, the book of the Revelation, John writes about the resurrection of multitudes of people (Rev. 20:5, 6).

The Bible speaks much about our resurrection from the dead. It's not a minor topic in the Scriptures.

Even the historical creeds recognize this fact. Both the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed speak about the resurrection on two occasions. The first speaks of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The second speaks of the resurrection of believers in the body.

And yet, our resurrection is often overshadowed by the resurrection of Christ. It's not that this is wrong. I'd rather talk about Jesus than about us. Additionally, His resurrection is the basis for our resurrection. So, there always needs to be the priority of His resurrection over ours. Also, the first movie is always better than the sequel. However, we do need to get to the rest of the story.

And so, this morning, for one more Sunday, I'd like to linger upon this topic of the resurrection, focusing not so much upon the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Rather, I want to focus our time upon our own resurrection from the dead. For this reason, I have entitled my message this morning, "Our Resurrection."

To do this, I want 1 Corinthians 15 again to be our guide. This morning, we are going to tackle a bunch of verses, 24 verses to be exact. I want to begin in 1 Corinthians 15:35, and we will take it all the way down through the end of the chapter (which ends in verse 58).

Before we dive in, I want to acknowledge how difficult these words are. I remember in my first year of seminary, the dean of the seminary was dying of lung cancer. During his last few weeks on earth, I took a class from his best friend, who was visiting him often in the hospital. One day, at the beginning of class, my professor was talking about how he had visited this man in the hospital and how he was really close to death. Trying to comfort him, my professor read the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 15 to this man. Upon finishing the chapter, the dying seminary professor said, "What does it mean?"

Now, it's not that this man was ignorant of this portion of Scripture. Not at all. I'm sure that he had spent much time reading and studying this portion of Scripture. I wouldn't be surprised if he had memorized this chapter. His comment was simply an expression of the mystery involved in this chapter.

First Corinthians 15 is a difficult chapter in the Bible, because it is describing something that is unfamiliar to us. None of us have been beyond the grave to experience the other side. And as such, it is difficult for us to fully comprehend it all.

This past week, I attended a birthday party of a friend who turned 29 and wanted to use the opportunity for evangelism. He invited about 50 of his friends and family to come to his birthday party. At the party, he shared his testimony and called those who attended to believe on

Christ. Then, we all had pizza and birthday cake. He then rented out Laser Quest for two rounds of games.

There were about 25 people who played laser tag that night. This was the first time that I had ever played. I didn't fully know what to expect. I knew that we would go around in the dark shooting at each other with lasers as we moved, but that's about all. When we were called for our game, we were brought into a small room where we were given instructions on how to play. The woman who went over the instructions with us talked very, very fast. My daughter turned and said to me, "Dad, I didn't understand a word of what she said!" I barely understood as well. All I knew was that we would put on a vest of some type with lights and shoot at each other with a laser (which I explained also to my daughter).

However, after playing a round and asking a few questions, I was much better prepared for the second round. I now understood that there were mirrors and ramps. I now understood that you needed to shoot at any green light that you saw. I understood a good strategy (i. e. to find a place where nobody can get you from behind, but you can shoot everyone in front of you).

I was ready to play the second round. Why? Because now I had been to the other side and had experienced it. So also is the resurrection of the dead. We can be told about it. It can be explained to us. But, it is still difficult for us to fully understand, because we have never been to the other side. As such, there is mystery surrounding the resurrection. Now, this doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to understand. And so, this morning, I want to try to understand.

My aim this morning is for you to spend some time thinking about the day when you will receive your resurrection body. I know that my words will fail to describe for you **all** that you will experience in eternity. Quoting Isaiah, Paul wrote, "Eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and [it has] not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9). However, this doesn't mean that we can't begin to understand what we will experience.

This is my heart this morning. I want for us to spend some time thinking about what our resurrection will be like. And then, having thought upon it, I want for you to so live this day, so as to prepare for that day.

The family that is planning a nice vacation this summer, will live today so as to prepare for that day. They will be careful in their spending, so that they will have enough for the trip. They will spend time reading about where they are going, so that they will be well-informed as to the various activities that they might be able to do once they arrive at their vacation spot. They will be diligent to pack and prepare everything at home before the trip.

And so, I want for you this morning to think upon the day when you receive a perfect body. I want for you to think about receiving a sinless body. I want for you to imagine having a body that will never be sick or sore or tired or weary. I want for you to imagine having a body that will never die! I want for you to long to receive that body. I want you to say with Paul, "To live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). I want for you to desire to depart and to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23), yet being content in remaining because you know that it is better for us for you to stay, as you will have opportunity to serve us.

I know that there is something within you that longs for that day when you will have such a body. I know that because Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God "has set eternity into the hearts [of men]." God has made all of us with this desire to have a body that will live forever. This is why many seek for the fountain of youth. This is why many don't like to think about death. But, there is something within all of us that longs something better than what we have today. This is especially true the older that you get. The more aches and pains that you have, the more you long for a new body. The more you experience sickness and hardship and troubles, the more you long for a new body.

Please realize that our present condition is not the way that God created the world. Our aches and pains and trials and troubles all come from the fall of Adam. When God created the world, He created it good. And yet, Adam and Eve sinned by eating of the tree in the garden. In so doing, they disobeyed the clear word of God. As a result, "the [entire] creation was subjected to futility" (Rom. 8:20). Thus, the "whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth" (Rom. 8:22). But, there will be a day when "the creation itself ... will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). The this reason, Paul writes, "the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19).

Are you longing for that day? Are you longing for that day when your days on earth are finished and you are united with Christ with a new body in a new heavens and a new earth? This morning, I want to put in your hearts this morning a passionate longing for your resurrection.

For this, we turn to 1 Corinthians 15. Let's begin by looking at verse 35, as this verse will really set the stage for the rest of our study this morning.

1 Corinthians 15:35

But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?"

We see here two questions that Paul asks. He asks them because he knows that these questions are on the minds of those in Corinth. In the context of the next 23 verses, Paul answers these two questions. The first question, "How are the dead raised?" is answered in verses 50-58. The second question, "With what kind of body do they come?" is answered in verses 36-49.

As Paul sets the agenda, we'll follow his outline this morning. First question:

1. With What Kind of Body Do They Come? (verses 35-49)

Isn't this always the sort of questions that you have about the resurrection? What will my resurrected body be like? Will I have two arms and legs? Will I have the ability to fly? Will I be able to go through walls, like Jesus did? Will I need to eat? Will I ever gain weight? How tall will I

be? Will I get tired? Will I need to sleep? What age will I appear to be? What age will my children be? Will I need to bathe? Will I need to learn? What language will I speak? Will I have a job to do? This is simply a sampling of the questions that you might have about your body in the resurrection.

I believe these are all legitimate questions. Some of them have decent answers. With some of them all we can do is guess. But, if they are asked with the right spirit, they are good questions. But, you can ask these sorts of questions in a wrong way as well. And perhaps that's what Paul is getting at in verse 36, where he calls those in Corinthians "fools" (in verse 36).

There are fools who will ask questions trying to make their point by the absurdity of the situation. Perhaps you remember when Jesus was approached by the Sadducees, who didn't believe in the resurrection, with a question about the resurrection. They put forth this scenario to Jesus, saying, ...

Matthew 22:24-28

Teacher, Moses said, "if a man dies having no children, his brother as next of kin shall marry his wife, and raise up children for his brother." Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother; so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. Last of all, the woman died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had married her."

These Sadducees had reasoned that such a bizarre scenario would obviously disprove the resurrection. Perhaps there were those in Corinth, who were trying as well to disprove the resurrection by their bizarre interpretations of the resurrection. "C'mon Paul, what do you mean that we are going to be resurrected to life? How are the dead raised Paul? What sort of body might they have? A body like Lazarus? He was in the tomb for four days, already decaying! What about those who have been dead for years? What sort of body will they have? Are they going to walk around like skeletons? C'mon, this resurrection thing can't really happen can it?"

Well, beginning in verse 36, Paul begins to answer the question about what our body will be like. But, he doesn't do so directly. Rather, he does so by way of analogy. Paul says, ...

1 Corinthians 15:36-38

That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own.

In other words, if you want a flower to blossom, you need to first put a seed into the ground and let it die. But, through the process of dying, the seed will sprout forth something new, something different than it was before. You sprout the seed and the flower comes. What sprouts is much better than what was placed in the ground. Which is more glorious? The seed or the flower?

Here's the reality of the analogy this morning. We are all seeds. The bodies that we have are like seeds that the Lord will put in the ground. When the day comes that we die and are laid in the ground, it's only then that we will sprout forth and really live!! Our lives will be transformed from the seed-life that we experience now into the flower life that we will experience in the future!

Can you imagine these seeds talking with each other about their destiny. They are in the packet in the store, waiting to be purchased by a customer someplace. Some are looking forward to the day when they are taken out of the dark and dry atmosphere of the seed packet. But, other seeds are not looking forward to that day, as they believe that seed-life is all that there is. Can you imagine these seeds having discussions about the resurrection? One seed says to another seed, "How are the seeds raised? With what kind of seed do they come?"

Now, seeds may not be fully able to understand what they will be like. But, they can expect that it will be much better than life now. And our lives are the same. When the seed of this body is planted, it will sprout something that is amazing!

In verse 39, Paul continues with another analogy.

1 Corinthians 15:39-41

All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

When God created the world, he created great variety. On the third day of creation, the Lord made all sorts of vegetation to cover the earth: wheat and rice and corn and beans and lettuce and flowers and trees and bushes and shrubs and grass and moss. On the fourth day of creation, the Lord made the sun and the moon and all of the stars. On the fifth day of creation, the Lord made creatures to swarm in the sea and in the air: eagles and bats and owls and pigeons and sharks and whales and trout and shrimp. On the sixth day of creation, the Lord made the land animals: cows and horses and dogs and cats and leopards and zebras and coyotes. Finally, the Lord God made man in His own image.

Every single created thing has its own flesh. The flesh of a crocodile is different than the flesh of a giraffe. The flesh of a dove is different than the flesh of a chicken. The flesh of a clown fish is different than the flesh of a dolphin. The flesh of a gorilla is different than the flesh of a human being. The same goes for the heavenly bodies as well. The stars and the planets and the moons and the asteroids all have differing glories. The substance of Mercury is different than Haley's comet. The substance of the sun is different than the substance of Jupiter.

Some of God's creation is more glorious than other portions of God's creation. The glory and luster of the sun is different than the glory and luster of the moon. The sun emits light, whereas the moon can only reflect light. The glory of the star, Betelgeuse, is different than the glory of Proxima Centauri. Betelgeuse is well over a trillion times larger than Proxima Centauri. This is the way that the Lord has created the universe. Different beings have different glory. Different objects have different glory.

The conclusion of the analogy comes here in verse 42, ...

1 Corinthians 15:42
So also is the resurrection of the dead."

Our resurrection body has its own glory, which is different than our earthly body.

In verses 42-44, we see how much more glorious our resurrection body will be compared with our natural body. Paul gives four ways that we can compare the body that we have right now with our resurrection body that we will have someday.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44
It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

1. Our body that we have is first sown perishable.

That is, it won't last forever. From the moment that you are born, you are on the road to death. I don't care how healthy you eat. I don't care how diligently you exercise. I don't care how faithfully you visit your doctor. I don't care how carefully you follow his advice. You are on the road to death. There is no escaping it.

But, our resurrection body will be entirely different than this. It will be imperishable! It's not going to die. It will live forever!

2. Our earthly body is sown in dishonor.

Paul's words here may well be talking about sin. David wrote, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." This doesn't mean that David was conceived in the act of sin. Rather, it was into the realm of sin into which he was conceived. Our bodies bear the image of God, but due to sin, it's marred and distorted. In this way, we are not fully honoring to God.

With these words, Paul also may be referring to the many things about our bodies that are not so honorable. The food we eat may taste and smell good, but once it's processed by your body, it's not quite so nice. After a hard day's work in the sun, your body has some unpleasant aromas. After sleeping all night, your breath has some unpleasant aromas. We have unwanted hair on our bodies. Our bodies stain our clothes.

And perhaps one of the most dishonorable of all times is during the days of death. When you can no longer care for yourself. You can't leave the room, because you can't get out of bed. A nurse needs to bathe you. You need to have somebody brush your teeth. Somebody needs to feed you.

But, our resurrection body will be different than this. There will be no dishonor. It will be raised in glory! I believe that many of the indignities of life will be removed in our resurrection bodies.

3. Our earthly body is sown in weakness.

The Olympics are coming up this fall. If you watch them on television, you will see some pretty strong people. In the weightlifting arena, you might see a guy clean and jerk some 500 pounds! In the track, you might see a guy shot put a 16 pound shot some 75 feet!

But, as strong and impressive as these feats are, we have machines that can easily do these things. A simple crane can lift dozens more than the strongest weightlifter. And an old fashioned cannon can shoot a cannonball 50 times further than a human can.

Please not also that every Olympic athlete is susceptible to illness. A microscopic virus can so debilitate the best of athletes that they need medical attention. The common cold affects us all. Olympic athletes are not immune to this. You get a slight fever and a general achiness in your entire body.

But, our resurrection body will be different than this. We will be strong. As Revelation 21:4 says, "There will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain."

4. Our body is sown a natural body.

In other words, our bodies are made of the dust of the ground. There is nothing special about it. It is made of the elements of the earth.

You are 65% Oxygen You are 18% Carbon You are 10% Hydrogen You are 3% Nitrogen You are 1.5% Calcium You are 1.2% Potassium. [\[1\]](#)

But, our resurrection body will be a bit different than this. As Paul writes in verse 44, "it is raised a spiritual body." Perhaps this means that we will be made of slightly different substance, which will be imperishable, which will be glorious, which will give us a power that we don't experience now.

The best analogy that I can think of these things is the superman illustration. We are Clark Kent today. But, there will be a day when we receive our resurrection bodies and will be more like Superman. Although he looks like us, he seems to be made of a different substance than we are! Bullets can't penetrate his skin. His eyes can see deeper than our eyes can see.

Now, we may not have the superpowers of Superman. But, we will be different. We will be better. We will be super-natural.

In verse 45, Paul begins to show us where to look to understand how different we will be. He writes, ...

1 Corinthians 15:45-46

So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.

Here Paul quotes from Genesis 2:7, which records the creation of man. "The LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." The miracle of man had begun. From the regular elements of the earth, God put them together to form a living being, which could move and act and think and pro-create.

Sadly, as we all know, Adam's sin plunged his descendents into a terrible mess. Adam's deeds have marred the creation. We experience death and dishonor and weakness because of Adam's sin.

But on the flip side, there is good news. Another man came along, Paul identifies him as "the last Adam." This is referring to Jesus. He was different than Adam. Adam was given natural life. Jesus gives spiritual life. Or, to use Paul's terminology, He is "a life-giving spirit."

From Adam, we inherit sin and death and pain and disease. From Christ, we inherit life forgiveness and life and well-being.

It was necessary for the natural to come first, and then the spiritual. Just as a flower begins as a seed, so also does our natural body proceed our spiritual body. Let's continue in verse 47, ...

1 Corinthians 15:47

The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

This is easy enough. Adam was clearly from the earth. He was made from the dust of the ground. His origin was from the earth, as is our origin. But, Jesus was different. He clearly came from heaven. In Philippians 2, we read of who Christ "existed in the form of God [in heaven], ... but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of man" (Phi. 2:6-7). So, we have an earthly man and a heavenly man. In verse 48, Paul writes, ...

1 Corinthians 15:48

As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

If you are one of Adam's race, then you are of his nature. He was of the earth, and so we are of the earth. If you are one of Christ's race, then you are of His nature. He was of the heavenly, and so we are also of the heavenly. This is repeated again in verse 49, but showing the link.

1 Corinthians 15:49

Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

This is where it gets exciting. We know all about our earthly existence, because we have experienced it, because we have borne the image of Adam, who was earthly. But, in Christ, we will know about the heavenly existence, because we bear the image of Christ. In fact, we will "bear the image of the heavenly." That is, our resurrected body will be like the resurrected body of Jesus. God's goal in saving us is to make us like Jesus.

We love Romans 8:29, and 30, because they describe the security of our salvation. God began our salvation in eternity past when He "foreknew" us and "predestined" us. God brought our salvation about in our present experience by "calling" us and "justifying" us. God will bring our salvation to its perfect conclusion when we are "glorified." But we can often miss God's purpose in the whole matter. God's purpose

is to conform us into the image of Jesus. He wants to make us like His Son! The earthly will bear the image of the heavenly.

Listen for this concept in Romans 8:29-30, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren." In other words, God's plan for history is for us to be like His Son. According to 1 Corinthians 15, this means that we will someday have a resurrection body like that of Jesus.

"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is," says the apostle John (1 John 3:2). John's not talking about what Jesus was like before His resurrection. He's talking about being like Jesus after His resurrection. We will have a resurrection body like that of Jesus.

Paul said, "The Lord Jesus Christ; will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory" (Phil. 3:20-21). So, what does this mean? It means that we look at the resurrected body of Jesus and realize that it is our prototype. Paul was looking forward to the day when his body would be like the body of Jesus.

We will be like Jesus someday. We will no longer be touched by the curse. I love the way Randy Alcorn puts it, ""The difference between Adam and Christ is not that one was a physical being and the other wasn't. It was that Adam was under sin and the Curse, and Christ was untouched by sin and the Curse." [\[2\]](#)

When Jesus returned to earth, His resurrection body was on display for us to see. The most prominent thing that shocks us is that His resurrected body appeared to be much the same as His natural body. Jesus interacted with His disciples in such a way that they weren't spooked by His presence. Jesus wasn't a ghost (Luke 24:39). He still communicated the same way. We see Jesus walking and talking with His disciples. He still needed nutrition. He ate with His disciples.

There is every reason to believe that our resurrection body will appear much like our bodies do right now. Perhaps you remember when Jesus was transformed on the mountain (Matt. 17). Elijah and Moses appeared with Jesus in their resurrection bodies, which looked much like normal people. And yet, there was certainly something unique about Moses and Elijah. They appeared and disappeared just as quickly.

Perhaps you remember when Jesus appeared to His disciples. The doors were locked (John 20:26). And yet, Jesus was able to simply appear into their midst (John 20:26). Now, Jesus may have been able to do this because of His divinity. But, it may be because of what a resurrected body is like.

So, don't think of your resurrection body as looking much different than your body today. I do believe that it will have substance. But, there are some things about it that will be much better. It will be imperishable and glorious and strong

Let's quickly look at my second point this morning. It's Paul's first question in verse 35, ...

2. How Are the Dead Raised? (verses 50-58)

The answer is really quite simple. It's God! If God was powerful enough to create our natural bodies. Then, He is certainly able to create our supernatural bodies. There is a reason why God will change us so. It's found in verse 50, ...

1 Corinthians 15:50

Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

God made the universe in such a way that it is impossible for our present bodies to inherit the kingdom of God. You don't get to heaven without believing in Jesus. And you don't inherit the kingdom unless your body is changed and made capable of entering His kingdom. How exactly it happens, I don't know. Nor does Paul, really. Look at what he says in verse 51, ...

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

At this point, I believe that Paul is talking about the return of Christ, when the trumpet sounds. The dead will first be raised to life. And then those who are alive at His return will be instantly given a resurrection body without having to go through the experience of death. Paul dealt with the same issue with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

Christ will descend from heaven (1) with a shout, (2) with the voice of the archangel, and (3) with the trumpet of God. It will be a very public, loud event. There will be shouts and trumpets! When it takes place, the entire world will know about it.

Those who have died will rise first. And then, those who are still alive will be "caught up" together with Christ in the clouds. We will be

removed from the earth at this time. This is often called, "the rapture."

I believe that this is what Jesus was referring to the rapture when He said, ...

Matthew 24:29-31

"But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the son of man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

You see the same elements taking place here. You see "The Son of Man is coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory." You see the angels coming with "a great trumpet." You see a great gathering of the elect from the entire earth. That is, believers all around the world will be gathered together to be with the Lord Jesus. What a day that will be!

In verse 53, Paul continues to describe how the Lord will do this. ...

1 Corinthians 15:53

For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

This is a bit of a repetition of the concept found in verse 50. Our earthly, perishable, dishonorable, sinful bodies cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Just as we can't enter God's holy presence with unforgiven sin, so is it impossible for us to inherit the kingdom of God with our mortal bodies. So, God changes us to qualify us to enter the kingdom. When that happens, we have great reason to rejoice. Look at verse 54, ...

1 Corinthians 15:54-57

But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul quotes these triumphant words from the Old Testament Scripture! (Is. 25:8; Hos. 13:14). When you have your new body, you will be free from death!

The world we experience now is not how God created the world. But, when Adam sinned, death came into the world. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned." Sin and its effects are all around us. The pain we experience is incredible. We experience pain and sickness and hospitals and medicines and surgeries and deaths of loved ones.

But, there will be a day when all of this is wiped away. Death will be no more! Jesus conquered death for us. Thanks be to God!

It's in that day that we will fully realize the fulfillment of **all** of God's promises to us. One of the great promises of Scripture comes in Psalm 103:2-3, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits. Who pardons all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases." We have not yet experienced this blessing to us. (How many of you were sick this winter?). Oh, but there will be a day when it's over. On that day, there will be no more death, no more mourning, no more crying, and no more pain. All of these things will pass away. Thanks be to God!

At this point, you may well say, "So What?" Paul gives us the "So What?" in verse 58, ...

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

In other words, "It's worth it." Paul encourages us here to stand firm on our faith in Christ. Paul began this chapter with a concern as to whether or not they had an empty faith (verse 2). Here, he exhorts them to stand firm in their faith and not drift away.

The exhortation comes straight to us. Be immovable when it comes to believing in Him and His resurrection. Continue to labor long and hard for the Lord, because you know that your labor is not in vain. One day, you will receive your resurrection body. On that day, all of your struggles and all of your labors will be worth it. You will have no regrets.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 30, 2008 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] According to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abundance_of_the_chemical_elements#Human_body.

[2] Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, p. 115.